



## Localities

A sample survey of county officials conducted by the National Association of Counties (NACO) in 1999 indicated that county governments primarily rely on federal programs for drought assistance (Appendix B, File E). More than seventy-five percent of the 177 respondents indicated that they use federal programs to respond during drought emergencies. This represents a small sample of the 3,066 counties across the country. However, it is a starting place to understand local government needs.

Twenty percent of the 177 respondents have county or city drought assistance programs or regulations that include drought emergency response as well as water conservation plans incorporating drought contingency procedures. Most counties have emergency procedures for disasters, including drought, and communication channels to get information to their populations.

County officials must try to manage fragmented federal assistance programs to help their constituents. Links may exist between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and farmers through Cooperative Extension offices, the Department's Service Centers, and Resource Conservation and Development Councils. But coordination and communication may not be efficient, or extend beyond traditional agricultural users, especially during a drought emergency. The Commission heard considerable testimony from county and other local officials that these linkages are often laden with bureaucracy, delays, and program

guidelines that do not reflect environmental, resource, temperature, and climate variability across the country. In Billings, Montana, for example, the important drought-related factor of wind is not included in the Department of Agriculture's assessment process. In addition, many people testified to the significant lack of weather and streamflow gages and data in general that are needed to substantiate, review, and make decisions about their applications for agricultural assistance.

Counties, towns, and rural areas are facing suburban growth and development. To provide public health, safety, and welfare services, counties with increasing populations must be able to plan for future needs. A local government's ability to plan for drought is dramatically improved if technical data, tools, and resources are available.

Local governments must also inform and educate their constituents of the need for drought planning, especially when an emergency is not imminent. Many local governments have public information programs on water resources that could be supplemented with information about drought.

Communities can plan to minimize impacts when a drought reduces water supplies. With the exception of the city of Santa Barbara and surrounding communities in California during the 1987-1992 drought, droughts have not created a potable water emergency in large cities since the 1960s. This is in part because of the

### Examples of Localities with Drought-related Programs:

Thirty-five percent of the 177 counties that responded to the National Association of Counties' 1999 sample survey were from Georgia. Others included:

Graham County, Arizona  
Navajo County, Arizona  
Yuba County, California  
Bannock County, Idaho  
Lake County, Indiana

Becker County, Minnesota  
Yellowstone County, Montana  
Benson County, North Dakota  
Muskingum County, Ohio  
Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

Williamson County, Texas  
Gloucester County, Virginia  
Marion County, West Virginia  
Dane County, Wisconsin

We also heard about many drought preparedness measures developed by municipalities, including those in New York City, Scottsdale, Arizona, and Denver, Colorado. More than 400 local agencies in California engage in drought preparedness efforts, including agencies in the cities of Los Angeles, San Francisco, and San Diego.